THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ROMANIA - A USEFUL SOCIAL MECHANISM ON THE LABOR MARKET

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Abstract:The concept of non-formal or alternative education, recently imposed in the language of specialists, refers to the forms of institutionalization and organized for the purpose of transmitting educational values, but which do not belong to the formal education system. There is also the notion of extra-curricular education, but it can generate confusion, rather than thinking about extracurricular activities carried out within the formal system and not covered by this study. Romania has developed in this case, non-formal education taking different forms that help young Romanians find their way to life easier, a successful career, but also a free and creative way of thinking.

Keywords: non-formal education, labor market, alternative education, labor market, European projects

We strictly understand non-formal education: the set of institutions and activities with mainstream educational functions but which are independent of the formal education system and which are usually subject to distinct regulations. To the extent that the forms of education outside the formal system have developed autonomously, in specific forms we can speak of an autonomous system of non-formal education, its most important functions being to supplement the educational contribution of the school, as well as to supports the process of professional reconversion, in the conditions of the current labor market dynamics and rapid technological change. We can interpret the non-formal education system as a useful social mechanism that allows mobility on the labor market, on-the-job adaptation and continuous adjustment between labor supply and demand. (Costea, O., 2009)

Beyond its complementary virtues of the education system, we can observe that non-formal education also has specific advantages over the first. Indeed, because of their imperfect nature, public goods, including formal education, are not selected by the impersonal mechanism of the market but are allocated by politicians, officials, philosophers, ideological and political criteria, and the risk of inadequacy between demand and offer. For example, people can "deliver" goods they do not need or, on the contrary, they may be deprived of the goods they need. Thus, if formal education is inherently remarked by some rigidity in its relationship with society in general and with the labor market in particular, in the non-formal area, the fulfillment of the real education needs is automatically solved by the educational market mechanism natural regulation between supply and demand), which in turn is influenced by the labor market, the professions market, the goods and services market, etc.

The limited benefits of non-formal education can also be seen in the personal life plan, in that its beneficiaries have the opportunity to select their own learning areas, interested in interests or passions, hobbies, areas of interest. In addition, due to rapid changes and uncertainty, man's need to control his own life is increasing today, including in areas that traditionally belong to family and school: education and then professionalism.

Thus, education is no longer exclusively a unidirectional, long-lasting and decisive process for the whole of life, but tends to become an interactive one in which the subject of education has an increasing power in selecting, rationalizing, plan, combine on its own the forms of education. Factors conducive to the development of the non-formal education

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system in Romania We have already seen that one of the negative effects of the intellectualization of the labor market and of the increased participation in education was the deepening of the fallacy between the formal education system and the labor market. (Mitulescu, S.; Simache, D.,2008)

But as a positive phenomenon is usually offset by a negative phenomenon and vice versa, it seems that non-formal education profits and proliferates into the "shadow" of formal education institutions, regulating the dysfunctions created by the system and cutting the asperities between traditional school and the labor market.

Non-formal education means any action outside the school system, which forms a bridge between teachers' knowledge and their implementation. This modern type of training eliminates the stress of catalog notes, imposed discipline and mandatory themes. It means the pleasure of knowing and developing. We need to make it clear that it is useful to adhere to rules and principles for conducting non-formal quality activities. They are based on the competences and content of formal education and offer various possibilities to apply the knowledge acquired in formal education. (Blîndul, V., 2015) Do not exclude students' effort and are attractive due to their varied forms (reading, sports, cultural-scientific circles, meetings with writers, science clubs, school holidays, hiking, trips, camps, expeditions, weekend school, contests, visits to museums, libraries, etc.). As a rule, activities take place in school and consist of circles on thematic or multidisciplinary disciplines, cultural/sporting competitions, scientific communications sessions, commemorations or festivities, olympics, etc.

They have a formative-educational character, they are optional or optional, they know different ways of financing, do not imply notes and rigorous evaluation, they promote teamwork, they require a cross- / trans- / interdisciplinary approach, they are directed by specialized staff, close contact with parents, pupils, sociocultural or political organizations. Content is organized on areas of interest, not years of study or academic subjects.

Educational valences of non-formal activities highlight the more intense, closer relationship between educator and educated. Even if the teacher leads the whole didactic approach, students can manifest themselves spontaneously and freely. The adult does not impose punctual views, at best suggests, cooperates and supports them to become good organizers of their own activity. At the forefront lies the educator, and secondly the teacher remains, in order for the pupil to be able to use his / her organizational skills, cooperation, collaboration, accountability. The variety of didactic strategies offers the student the chance to accumulate life experiences through direct contact with people, with material and spiritual cultural phenomena. The educated becomes a resource, a producer, an opinion leader, in other words an active participant in their own learning. (Pop, C.F., 2018)

Other favorable conditions for the development of alternative education were, on the one hand, the abolition of arts and crafts schools, and the decline of post-secondary schools, on the other hand, which allowed a certain important segment of non-formal education - the one specialized in crafts and crafts - to attract as many learners as possible and to grow. Another condition conducive to the development of non-formal learning units was the compulsory practice of trades, according to the regulations in the field. This has made it possible to establish fruitful partnerships between learning units and employers, with many trainees being seen "alive" by employers and more easily assimilated into the workforce.

Among other incentive conditions, we can also notice the partnerships of the Ministry of Labor at European level, which today allow for the wide recognition of European certificates of professional competences acquired under non-formal conditions, as some of the interlocutors tell us. In some situations, these international protocols have been concluded directly by training providers from different cities in Romania.

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Based on these premises, let's say local, adds the global tendency of society to intellectualize work in general in which skill, professional education and innovation are considered to be essential conditions of economic development, stimulating to a greater extent the interest of young people and adults in lifelong learning. Not accidentally, in Romania, in the last decade, we witness a spectacular increase in the number *of non-formal education units* offering *educational services* for adults and young people, whether we refer to government institutions, school units, nonprofit organizations, trade companies or free- in the educational field, a social phenomenon reflected in a new legislative and institutional framework in the field (first of all, about Ordinance 129/2000).

Under these circumstances, the educational value has become more autonomous and has been increasingly withdrawn from the public sphere, aiming to be integrated into the free market mechanism and real life. As far as the categories of providers of alternative learning forms are concerned, they appear to be abundant.

By making an approximate inventory, we can note:

Private companies specialized in vocational training, but also possibly in consulting, professional counseling or accompanying services. These are, in turn, divided into two categories: those focused on crafts and crafts, those focused on more complex and interdisciplinary skills, such as management or communication. There is also a wide range of "open source" courses in both categories, which primarily relate to additional skills such as ICT, foreign languages, HR inspector, training of trainers, etc. A particular category is distance learning units, which are distinguished by their accessibility and broader addressability.

Private companies with a more general profile, specialized in human resource development on the three basic components: *recruitment / selection, training and evaluation*, and addressing in particular organizational customers.

Companies in general that have developed their own employee training laboratories and have eventually turned their own nurseries into schools open to the general public for training in specific jobs;

The NGO sector has also had a tremendous amount of training, reaching the level of performance of private companies, and sometimes even surpassing it.

In many cases, the classical information and awareness campaigns run by associations have in the meantime become popularization or training courses. Also, closed-circuit training initially intended for its own staff, volunteers or other organizations has seen an extraordinary opening, involving the vast mass of beneficiaries or becoming well-equipped training facilities for a fee. (Belli, N., 2004)

Educational establishments (comprising almost all large universities in the country, but also post-secondary schools or high schools) are another category of organizations that have opened their doors to non-formal education, competing in turn for an educational act quality.

It is worth noting here the *popular universities*, insufficiently developed in Romania, whose role remains a double one: training and popularization, with a very wide address, both to less educated publics and, on the contrary, to the public more demanding.

Finally, *public institutions* have also become important actors in the training and information and awareness campaigns. We would like to mention here DJTS (Youth and Sports County Directions) responsible for implementing local youth policies, some mayoralties, but especially CRFPAs (Adult Vocational Training Centers) that offer conditions to European standards conducting training activities;

In addition, the information, counseling and training programs carried out by *European projects:* PHARE, Grundwing, Leonardo, POS DRU, ERASMUS + which, through their complementary, transversal action, multiply local initiatives, allow the creation

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of local and new establishments (centers) specialized in the formation and counseling of young people or adults.

And as far as the beneficiaries of the non-formal education courses are concerned, we can describe several categories. (Neacșu-Dalu, 2008) Thus, according to their status, we can differentiate between:

- single persons who want to learn,
- persons sent by their own organizations to develop professionally,
- In addition, disadvantaged groups (graduates, ex-detainees, rural people, disabled people, Roma, etc.) are added to these, who can enjoy free courses during some special programs.

Also, depending on the intended purpose, we identify:

- persons wishing to develop professionally, to learn a profession, to improve in their field of work or to acquire additional skills (e.g. computer, languages) in trades where interdisciplinarity is required.
- persons interested in knowing ABC of a job in order to open a business in the field,
- people who follow courses of curiosity, passion or practical needs (for example, contraceptive education, hygiene, etc.), so for their strictly personal development,
- or simply people who, for some pragmatic reasons, are only interested in certificates.

Regulations in the field of non-formal education

The main normative act regulating the field of non-formal education, officially called adult vocational training, is Ordinance no. 129 of 2000. The "coordinating" or "regulating" institution is the CNFPA (National Council for Adult Vocational Training). It is intended to authorize training providers across the country, to monitor their compliance with legal requirements and to assess the skills of beneficiaries to obtain professional certificates. Another public body involved is ANOFM (National Agency for Employment) and its subordinate territorial units at county level: AJOFMs (Regional Employment Agencies) or at regional level: CRFPAs (Regional Training Centers Adult Professional).

According to the law, the role of ANOFM is to coordinate the vocational training of job-seekers whether they are registered unemployed, unemployed or people seeking to change their place of work through its subordinate institutions: AJOFMs. They have as their main role the reintegration of adults seeking employment, in particular through training programs (free of charge for the unemployed) and other complementary support activities.

In turn, training activities are either entrusted directly to CRFPAs or are allocated on the basis of selection or bidding to private training providers. The established training conditions are as follows:

- following a vocational training course concluded with an examination;
- by assessing skills, without the need for a course;
- by apprenticeship at the workplace (according to the labor code)

Vocational training involves three levels of difficulty, each level being assigned by law a certain number of hours:

- Initial training courses useful for those working in interdisciplinary fields who learn for themselves or who want to open a business,
- qualification courses, also classified according to difficulty levels, useful or necessary for those who want to change their job, learn a new job and reintegrate professionally,
- advanced training courses, preferred by those who want to improve their knowledge, practical skills or performance levels, and to adapt to technological change or to excel in a craft.

Vocational training is recognized through the acquisition of a graduation certificate recognized by the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education respectively. Only

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certified CNFPA vendors can issue certificates. Besides these, there are also unauthorized training providers who can run training programs according to their own rules or customized by type of beneficiaries. Employers can also organize training programs for their own employees, but are recognized only within those units.

In terms of ensuring the efficiency and quality of the offer of courses, the actors involved in the training are directly interested in maintaining a high standard of quality of the offered courses in order to attract as much as possible new clients. Ultimately, the highest target for protagonists involved in non-formal education must be "creating a viable attitude as an alternative to public education" and balancing pragmatically the superior prestige of formal education.(Mitulescu, S.; Simache D., 2008)

Not by accident, many of the training providers work best for the quality and seriousness recommendations. In particular, in the case of training coordinating institutions, such as AJOFMs, there are measurement and control tools of the quality standard: trainers' performance, subject and timetable follow-up through evaluator monitoring reports.

More important than quality is the requirement that traineeships should be searched on the labor market. Training providers are particularly attentive to market signals, either by observing the absorption rate of their graduates by type of craft: the courses are suitable for the labor market because they demonstrate their own effectiveness either through market studies: from documenting official statistics or job advertisements from newspapers to questionnaires addressed to companies.

Otherwise, a system of protocols with economic agents for trainees' practice allows very fine evaluation of the trades market. However, there is not always a correlation between labor market demand and the interests of course beneficiaries. There are less desirable trades, such as those in the industry: welders, industrial clothing manufacturers who, although having a certain search on the labor market, are considered somewhat anachronistic and avoided by the beneficiaries. (Costea, O., 2009)

Instead, the construction professions, but also those in the public catering (cooks, waiters) or in the field of beauty (hairdressers, hairdressers), which belong to the tertiary sector of the economy, enjoy greater success in the eyes of the beneficiaries. Therefore, an equally good way to prospect the market is to consult or evaluate the beneficiaries of training courses, for example through evaluation questionnaires on the jobs they would like to start or qualify for the next year.

In some cases, the idea of courses is directly linked to the work done by the organization and is not necessarily related to professional life or to market signals. One of the difficulties is that often the efficiency or quality of the courses does not make the difference, but the price, favoring the spread of the training providers with the price of dumping, specializing in the issue of "on demand" certificates, which do not provide adequate learning conditions . The reverse is that the low price tends to become generalized, becoming a tactic for almost all training providers in order to survive on the market, which obviously leads to the overall maintenance of a lower quality standard and even a low prestige of suppliers deformation. (Belli, N., 2004))

Consultancy and accompanying services In general, training providers "tick" in the complementary services of consulting, professional orientation, evaluation, accompaniment or monitoring of beneficiaries, but nowhere have we noticed an integrated and complete offer in this field. For example, I will also insist on this, that the non-formal system is not sufficiently promoted and does not carry out a sustained awareness campaign, information and socio-professional counseling of its potential beneficiaries, to be done early in high school or college, to guide young people to understand the importance of non-formal courses, if not to the detriment of formal education, at least in parallel with it.

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This adds to the acute lack of recreational nursery spaces for young people and to the useful time, whose presence around non-formal educational establishments could set a new trend, especially among those very pragmatic young people, who want to make a career quick. As far as the counseling services are concerned, they exist but in most cases they are less developed, because in principle the beneficiaries prefer to choose their own career orientation. In our opinion, there is a certain prejudice of the beneficiaries regarding the training providers that they have to offer only training and nothing else but which is not conducive to the development of these educational establishments.

There is, so to speak, a rich offer of training services, but not an appropriate atmosphere around it, to give it socially superiority. Perhaps a sustained public strategy to stimulate an atmosphere of education and professionalism around non-formal learning facilities would be beneficial in this respect. As far as the other important aspect of training units is concerned, namely work mediation, monitoring and accompanying services, this is somewhat more developed than that of counseling and guidance.(Neacșu-Dalu, I., 2008)

Here, the beneficiaries are somewhat more demanding, and they often ask for guarantees of success, not just strict training. As already noted, training providers often mediate between candidates and employers, through internships, indirectly and as centers of employment. It is true that most of the non-formal education system is covered by private institutions but leaves the participation of young people to education exclusively at the mercy of the impersonal mechanism of the market without a minimal active, stimulating policy in this area, even protectionist if it turns out to be the case, would be a sign of a lack of political and administrative involvement that runs counter to the current European philosophy of youth.

Like any philosophy, it also presupposes arguments in its favor. Thus, from the point of view of the existence of social policies, human needs cannot be viewed from a strictly pragmatic angle, as in the case of private agents: "we give the people what we are asked", but public policy must at the same time, offer some higher-rank axiological reference points, which look to the future, not just to the immediate present. Such a principle is also the idea that young people are a fundamental resource of social reproduction and therefore that it must be stimulated by specific measures.

On the other hand, despite the fact that youth is a potential resource of change, the transition to adulthood also determines a crisis in the personality of the teenager or post-adolescent, which makes him vulnerable to society: "adolescence is the period of imbalances, adjustments, conversions; and this biological, so the universe. This situation gives him dissatisfaction and frustration - a "crisis of originality" - being tempted either to despair, isolation, non-communication, or to radical, eccentric actions such as anti-social behavior, alcohol and drug use, to compensate him , a prestige and a passenger identity. Under these circumstances, a special policy in favor of youth, even if it is protection, seems not only desirable but also necessary. (Belli, N., 2004)

Major changes in the labor market due to its massive intellectualization and accelerated technological flow, puts young people in a position to learn or to continuously specialize: to be permanently informed, to train, to retrain, to be self-taught, to be continually challenged to the new, to deal with the rapid changes of the market, which puts additional pressure on them and which can result in disillusionment, anxiety, feeling of uncertainty. Another side of the recent problems faced by young people is the decline of traditional family patterns, accompanied obviously by positive phenomena such as increasing youth autonomy, increasing the quality of childcare, etc., as well as negative phenomena such as increasing divorce , instability and domestic violence, which are causing serious problems in the conscience of young people.

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Unfortunately, contemporary societies face the issue of inequality on social strata and environments, revealing disadvantaged social categories that appear to be chronically losing on the labor market and can accelerate deeply in an unfavorable situation, and we refer here, in particular young people (especially young women) from rural areas, graduates of higher education, young unemployed or under-employed (semi-occupied), young Roma, etc.

In this sense, the involvement of the above-mentioned entities in non-formal education plays an important role in the development of society and, at the same time, it is necessary for them to be effectively promoted both nationally and internationally.

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